

NEWS

Budget promises more than \$3B for seniors and long-term-care improvements

By Janet E Silver (<https://ipolitics.ca/author/janetsilver/>). Published on Apr 19, 2021 4:55pm



The federal budget includes more money for seniors and funds to increase the standard of care at long-term care facilities.

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The federal government is pledging more than \$3 billion to help seniors.

After tabling her first budget as Finance minister on Monday, Chrystia Freeland apologized in the House of Commons for failing the residents of Canada’s long-term-care facilities.

“To them, and to their families, let me say this: I am so sorry,” Freeland said. “We owe you so much better than this.”

She went on to unveil her government’s proposal of \$3 billion over five years to help ensure provinces and territories provide a high standard of care in their long-term-care (LTC) homes. Cash is planned to start being delivered in the next fiscal year, 2022-23.

These homes were the hardest hit in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 80 per cent of early pandemic deaths tied to LTC facilities.

New funding follows earlier commitments from [November's fall economic statement \(https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2020/home-accueil-en.html\)](https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2020/home-accueil-en.html), which pledged up to \$1 billion for a "Safe Long-Term Care Fund," to help support LTC homes to prevent and control infections plus \$6.4 million over two years to be given to the non-profit Canadian Foundation for Health Improvement.

In its [September throne speech \(https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/speech-throne/2020/speech-from-the-throne.html\)](https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/speech-throne/2020/speech-from-the-throne.html), the federal government also promised to set new national standards for long-term care. The Health Standards Organization, a non-profit based in Ottawa, is currently developing those standards with Dr. Samir Sinha, director of geriatrics at Sinai Health and University Health Network of Toronto, as its chair.

Don Drummond, a former associate deputy Finance minister, says Canada's spending for LTC falls well short of the OECD average.

In an interview with iPolitics, Drummond said about 1.3 per cent of GDP is spent on LTC, whereas the OECD average is about 1.7 per cent. Given Canada's aging population, Drummond says that if we do not provide more funds for seniors to remain in their own home, costs for LTC will increase to about 4.2 per cent by 2040. He points to a study, [Ageing Well \(https://www.queensu.ca/sps/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.sps/www/files/files/Publications/Ageing%20Well%20Report%20-%20November%202020.pdf\)](https://www.queensu.ca/sps/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.sps/www/files/files/Publications/Ageing%20Well%20Report%20-%20November%202020.pdf), which he co-authored last November, that looks at the costs of LTC and care for seniors staying in their own home.

The government is also proposing funding for seniors who don't live in LTC, pledging \$90 million over three years starting in 2021-22 to Employment and Social Development Canada to launch the "Age Well at Home Initiative." This program is designed to help community organizations provide support to seniors so they can live at home longer by receiving help in areas like meal preparations, home maintenance, yard work and transportation.

Finally, the federal government is planning to increase old age security (OAS) next year for those who are 75 or older. Finance Canada says its proposed 10 per cent increase to OAS will benefit 3.3 million seniors. OAS recipients will also receive a one-time payment of \$500 in August as long as they are at least 75 years of age by June 2022. Last year, OAS recipients received a one-time payment of \$300, which the government said would help them pay for increased costs from grocery delivery charges or transit expenses, as a result of the pandemic.

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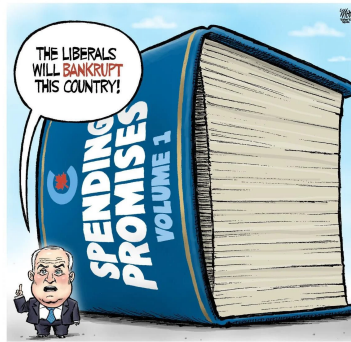
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